

Joe Straus

Biography

The Honorable Joe Straus was re-elected Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives by an overwhelming majority of House members at the commencement of the 82nd Regular Legislative Session on January 11, 2011. As Speaker, Joe Straus has set a tone of respectful leadership, empowering the members of the Texas House to do what is right for their constituents and for the people of Texas.

A fiscal conservative, Speaker Straus believes in limited government, low taxes, and spending restraint. His priorities for the state include promoting economic development, attracting new business and talent to Texas, and ensuring that our children are educated and equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century.

In addition to serving as Speaker, he represents San Antonio's 121st District, which includes the Bexar County communities of Alamo Heights, Olmos Park, Terrell Hills, Windcrest, and northeast San Antonio. Speaker Straus was first elected to the Texas House of Representatives in a special election in February 2005 (79th Regular Session).

His first session as Speaker, in 2009, was widely viewed as a success as legislators reduced taxes, set aside billions in a rainy day fund, and invested more money in priorities including education, college scholarships, and health care. During his service as a member of the Legislature, Speaker Straus has been a leader on economic issues, common sense tax relief, and energy efficiency measures. In the 2007 Legislative Session, Speaker Straus served on the Committee on Economic Development as Vice Chairman, the Committee on Regulated Industries, and the Committee on Local and Consent Calendars. In 2007, he authored legislation eliminating the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund tax, saving consumers more than \$200 million a year in taxes.

In addition to presiding over the Texas House, Speaker Straus serves as the co-chair of the Legislative Budget Board, the State Preservation Board, the Legislative Audit Committee, and the Texas Legislative Council. He is one of five members on the Legislative Redistricting Board. Speaker Straus also serves as a member of the Texas House Republican Caucus.

As a lifelong Republican, Speaker Straus has served on numerous campaign committees for federal, state, and local candidates, as a precinct chairman, and on the Management Committee of the Bexar County Republican Party. In 1986, he was U.S. Representative Lamar Smith's campaign manager in Smith's first race for Congress. Early in his career, he worked in public service in the administrations of President Ronald Reagan and President George H. W. Bush

Speaker Straus is a San Antonio native and a fifth-generation Texan. A graduate of Vanderbilt University, he has an insurance, investments, and executive benefits practice. He and his wife Julie have two daughters.

- Mr. South Texas, 2011, from Washington's Birthday Celebration Association and presented in Laredo, Texas for significant and lasting contributions to the growth and development of Laredo and the South Texas region. Speaker Straus is the 61st recipient of the award presented during the 114th year of the celebration.
- Big Voices for Little Texans Award, 2010, from Texas CASA for support of the work CASA volunteers do to help protect and serve vulnerable children.
- 2010 Independent Leadership Award presented by the Independent Insurance Agents of Texas in recognition of his independent and trusted leadership.
- Aspen-Rodel Fellowship Class of 2009, selected by invitation only through the Aspen

Institute. The Rodel Fellowship program seeks to enhance the underlying values and principles of our democracy and public service, and identifies America's emerging political leaders with reputations for intellect, thoughtfulness, and a commitment to civil dialogue.

- 2009 Inaugural Champion for Nursing Education Award given by the Texas Association of Deans and Directors of Professional Nursing Programs for work to address the professional nursing shortage and support increased enrollment and graduation of new Registered Nurses.
- Tom C. Frost Award, 2009, created by the University of Texas at San Antonio to honor an outstanding citizen who has provided exceptional leadership to important business and community endeavors.
- In 2008, Texas Monthly selected Speaker Straus as one of the 35 Texans who will shape the future of the state.
- Defender of the American Dream Award, 2008, from Americans for Prosperity for his record of voting consistently for free enterprise and taxpayer protections. As one of seventeen legislators to receive the "A" rating, Straus authored the bill eliminating the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund tax during the 80th Legislature.
- Public Official Award, 2007, given by Texas Public Power Association for leadership and contributions to public power.
- Law & Order Award and Freshman of the Year Award, 2005, by the Texas District and County Attorneys Association for his consistent support for prosecutors and crime victims, and his passage of HB 3265, which eliminated a loophole in Texas law allowing certain convicted defendants a new trial for reasons unrelated to accuracy or fairness of their trials.

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